3/21/72

Dear Howard,

What you report of the pressures on you re the Lattimer thing, Cyril, etc., is not a surprise to me for enclosed you'll find a note I wrote last night indicting it and asking you to ask me whatever might be bothering you. It is no simple matter and perhaps the best solution is your suggetion to talk it over hwne you are here. I have long been aware of and I must say entranced by the power of Sylvia's maggificent rages and passions. With her fantastic eloquence, they can be as overwhelming as they seem logical The problem is in part the absence of absolutes in right and wrong on this and in part the utter unwillingness of everyone else to engaged in a rational discussion of any element of it and in part unrecognized slefish motives Cyril, for example, never wrote me until it became a necessity in a transparent effort to make a record which he could later cite. I would not be surprised if it had been urged upon him bu another. But for all her eloquence to others, as you can see for yourself, Sylvia has yet to respond to my initial request of months ago that she give this independt thought and then discuss. For me this is all the raw material I need for a reasonable judgement. Becaus e she is so brilliant she fails to cope with real problems, depending, as is not exceptional, in an acquired dependence upon her judgement what to her has been so often so right over the years. We are all this way, in varying degrees. But what she does not recognize is how very often her judgement has been wrong, and to give you a few examples, Epstein, Thirnley. Lifton Forman (where it is incredible to me that she diun't see the gross flaws that permeate his work), Thompson. I could go on. Of course, the same general riticism can be made of me. I also err, also trust the wrong people. But I also never back off from a confrontation. And I don't think there has been an occasion where I haven't undertaken to reason. Not Sylvia. She condemns with all her majesty, ordains hers the one and true faith and position, and all else is ireelevant. One such case is Hoch's melonry. He immediately became a scoundrel and an agent. Another is Garriosn, where he passion led her to break a promise to me to be his devil's advocate without telling me and to financing that wretch Thornley. I mean no unkindness ot her, and I continue to have the same respect for her. She is human, as we all are. I have a better notion of what is going on that I have indicated for we have trouble enough and I propose doing nothing to counter it unless and until I decide that we need a real purging. Ican and may well then do a book that could accomplish this and at the same time be a commerical success. Meanwhile, we need no enemies, supplying enough of our own.

As a practical matter, must you be involved in this? Is there anything you can do that can make any difference? You have little time. Use what you can spare for constructive purposes. As you can see, the letters I have asked you to send to the Archives have been productive, as have those I have written in my own name. That you have not sent me what she has said of me and my position is understandable. If she did not specy confidentiality, it is the kind of thing where you might well feel yourself that you should keep it confidential. Meanwhile, I ask you to consider, not do anything about, the anti-intellectual quality of all of this. If I am wrong and if I am doing something, is it intelligent not to call my error to my attention, to try and correct me, or to at least put me in a psoition where I can come to this conclusionson my own? Why would anyone eschew this course? To me it is inconsistent with a recognized honesty of purpose, or rather with a subconscious objective not really understood and, I think, not part of the true character.

At some point Sylvia will confront what has been bugging her and she will not be happy. Until then I'm leaving her entirely alone. I respect her, expect perfection and infallibility from no one, do not want to hurt her (or to be hurt by her) , want to keep our internal problems to a minimum, and have long known her resolute inflexibility on certain things, including all the hangups I have detected. I might, by the way, have added Arnoni and Salandria to the above list. I sure as hell have done better than this, and I've had more opportunity for these kinds of kisjudgement than the entire criticial community nly because of my greater activity and the diversity of my activity/ There is much of this I have spared you. I think it best to keep it that way. But as you know, there are no locked files when you are here, no receipts for what you take, nothing hidden. Sorry about thee worse than usual typing. I've got the wrong ribbon in the machine and it will stay there until I wear it out or have to get onto the kind of work mkkaking it impermissible. Also in justification of Sylvia, I think you should recognize the unfairness to her or her position, partly employment (which makes possible what she will not do also) and partly her sex, a regretable limitation

Often it is possible for others to see in us what we cannot in ourselves. I am sure this is true of me. Sometimes my own recognition is belated, and often it has to do with spot analyses. With Sylvia this is not a new thing. Periodically in the past I have just stayed out of touch to avoid unpleasantnesses.. That has been the case for months now, and I visualize no change. I am genuinely sorry for her and what in my view causes her hangups and her rare dishonesties. They are comprehensible, human and unfortunately, as with all human, real. I say unfortunately because hers is a rare endowment.

I have been going into this in a short period of time before I can place a phone call. After that, although I'mquite tired, despite a serious effort to get more rest, I'm going outside for a couple of hours and in my joke liberate the pines from the repressive influence of the honeysuckle. As I've worked my way into the grove behind the house I find almost all the trees damaged, many dea, others almost certain to die, and I sure could use a few strong young arms to help. Once I've got the stuff out of the trees I have a continuing job of keeping it out. That will require that I get a second-hand mower or two for damage is inevitable and it will be cheaper to replace than repair, as I've learned by paying for repairs. I'm concentrating on that, not even walking to get it done, for soon t the bugs will preclude it. When I can place the call, I'll lay this aside.

I have learned more of Lattimer. He is hardly rational. You are not the only one who has written him and who he has no way of knowing writes for me. I'll be having to think about how to askanother to write him back.

On the Archives letter, that now gives enough for a viable suit. I think it would be fatal to your position and scholarship were you to do it. Whether or not I will I do not know. Perhaps I will. Any use waives all right to withhold. The problem is I do not know anyone I can trust to do this, and as I think should be apparent to you without argument from me, this bears on one of the points I have been making, that there is a concerted executive-branch effort to pin a bum rap on the Kennedy family. I'll be thinking of writing Marshall but may not. I may write Rhoads or Vawter, who hasn't responded to my last and may be having a few not undesigned troubles.

Howard, if we let this thing get out of perspective, we are all lost and with it what good we could have done and any possibility of establishing truth. There is what others seem not to want to consider, a vast difference bwteen establishung untruth, and that we have done with enormous overkill, and establishing truth, where, in my perhaps prejudiced view, there have been remarkable few efforts and fewer successes. Not matter how it is dignified with such designations as pmism, not matter how the contrary view is vilified, it remains a fact.

If I encurage you to stay out of active controversy, I do not discourage understanding. You might begin to get a smidgeon if you read the last couple of lines on xxxi of Accessories and I add that I called the error to her attention in advance of publication. Aside from the error in placing the appearance of the general edition of WHITEWAS at after Epstein, publication date of which was 6/31, whereas WW in that edition was out 5/7, to her knowledge, the "private" edition dates to 8/17/65. She read it early in 1966 or late in 1965 and you can read her written reaction any time you want. This is a petty matter, but if you think of it for a momentyou may get a few nptions of your own. They may or may not be mine and they may or may not help your present understanding. To me they leave no doubt at all in some regretable areas. And this is not an isolated thing.

We have been home every night since the beginning of tax season except for infrequent dinners with friend, perhap three times since 1/1, or my infrequent trips to the p.o. Too bad you couldn't make your trip to the Shendoah when it burst with life, as soon it will. Stay with your school as first priority. This is right and necessary. Glad you found the NBC transcript valuable. I may write more on the Arch matter soon or I may await hearing from Vawter. I haveanother decision to make that I have been delaying. I've been around and in t is business too long to require everything in black-and-write. I can deduce, and I'm content, at least in comparison, with the track record. So I'm confident I know what is afoot in some areas. On Ned,is there anything in his last letter I should know, anything you may not have detected hidden in it? Best,